

## **Dependents lose SOFA status 90 days after sponsor leaves Germany**

By Robert Szostek, Customs PAO

**Mannheim, Germany** – As units move or inactivate and Soldiers transfer to new locations, some family members may decide to stay on in Germany even though their sponsor has left the country. However, a dependent's logistical support involving such things as use of the PX/BX, commissary, vehicle registration, APO, entitlements to government housing and attendance to DoDDS schools etc., lasts only 90 days once their sponsor has left Germany.

“Sponsors must notify their local U.S. Forces customs office if any family members will be remaining in Germany beyond the 90 days unaccompanied, since these members will not be authorized logistical support,” said Blanka Williams, chief of the customs customer service branch at the USAREUR Customs Executive Agency.

“When the sponsor leaves Germany on a PCS or ETS move, you have to take all your vehicles and firearms out of the USAREUR registration system by the 90<sup>th</sup> day of your grace period,” Williams added.

During the 90 day grace period, you must give German customs a list of the household goods, personal belongings, and rationed items you still have. German customs will usually clear your goods tax-free and only charge duty on large amounts of alcoholic beverages and cigarettes. They will also give you the documents you need to register your vehicles in the German system.

But German customs will tax your possessions if you do not contact them in time. They will also seize sensitive items such as firearms, if the family member does not have a weapon permit and has not registered the weapon in the German system. People who are not German citizens can also get into trouble with immigration authorities if they stay longer than 90 days without official permission.

Williams explained that active duty Soldiers who deploy on unaccompanied hardship tours can apply for an exception that extends the family's logistical support in Germany until the sponsor returns from a hardship tour in a place like Iraq, Afghanistan or Korea. Exceptions are also available for family care providers who remain in Germany with minor children, etc.

For more information on loss of status or applying for an exception to policy for unaccompanied hardship tours, call your local U.S. Forces customs office. Additional information on government housing is available at your garrison housing office and DoDDS schools can advise you concerning school eligibility.